United Nations A/CONF.226/PC.3/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 June 2016

Original: English

Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)
Third session
Surabaya, Indonesia, 25-27 July 2016

Habitat III thematic meeting on metropolitan areas

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) hereby transmits the outcome document of the Habitat III thematic meeting on metropolitan areas, held in Montreal, Canada, on 6 and 7 October 2015.

16-09029 (E) 090616

Please recycle

Outcome document of the Habitat III thematic meeting on metropolitan areas

Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas

Fostering metropolitan cooperation for sustainable urban development

Global metropolization

An increasingly urban world

1. We live in an increasingly urban world. For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population live in cities. By 2050, this proportion will reach nearly 70 per cent. At the time of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, the world had 2.6 billion urban residents. It is estimated that by the time that the global community meets in Quito for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016, the number will have risen to 4 billion. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, by the end of the present "metropolitan century", most of the urbanization on our planet will likely have been completed, with about 85 per cent of the world's population living in cities by 2100. This rapid urban growth will be observed especially in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The rise of metropolitan areas

2. Currently, amid growing urbanization and suburbanization, cities are often part of larger metropolitan areas with high population densities, where the development of transportation infrastructure has both boosted trade, and expanded commuting distances. Social, geographical, economic, cultural and institutional contexts help define metropolitan areas, which vary worldwide. These areas, which are usually composed of one or more central cities with high population densities and large job pools, encompass a large labour pool within which most of the members of the population live and work. Relatively autonomous, they nevertheless interact with other metropolitan areas and other communities. The populations living in these areas are growing continuously. According to the latest United Nations population estimate, 50 per cent of urban residents live in agglomerations of 500,000 people or more.

Socio-spatial and socioeconomic inequalities

3. The transformation of our landscapes through the emergence of metropolitan areas is taking different forms, depending on the area. Growing urbanization sometimes leads to socio-spatial and socioeconomic inequalities, notably because of the absence of well-planned urban development and the inadequacy of investments, which sometimes cause an imbalance between city centres and the periphery.

Hubs of the globalized economy and culture

4. Now, more than ever, metropolitan areas, owing to their concentration of population and activities, play a key role in the social, cultural, environmental and economic development of nations. In most countries, metropolitan areas have

become the main hubs of the globalized economy and of culture, and key drivers of economic growth and innovation. As they account for a high share of gross domestic product (GDP) and exert a dominant influence on trends in human development, those areas attract both qualified workers and migrants seeking better job opportunities, including in the informal sector, and people who are hoping for a better quality of life. In most cases, higher-level economic functions are concentrated in metropolitan areas.

Metropolitan challenges

Significant challenges

5. The wave of urbanization in the twenty-first century can benefit individual residents, communities, countries and the planet as a whole. At the same time, however, significant challenges will have to be addressed through better planning and management, particularly for future generations.

Challenges facing metropolitan areas

6. More than ever, the challenges facing cities around the world in terms of urban planning, encompassing transportation, safety, urban revitalization, social inclusion and cohesion, environmental protection, water, air, energy, sanitation and climate change, are extending beyond local boundaries and, in view of our limited resources, are posing a challenge to production and consumption patterns. As more people move into the metropolitan areas surrounding central cities, local governments must innovate in terms of democratic decision-making and supra-local governance and develop new inter-territorial coordination strategies and mechanisms, so that they can face metropolitan area-wide challenges and enhance inter- and intra-cooperation aimed towards achieving attractiveness, competitiveness and social inclusion and cohesion.

Disparities of urban growth

7. The accelerated pace of urban growth can magnify economic, social and territorial disparities and, in certain areas, exacerbate shortages of basic goods and services which are essential to urban living, accelerate degradation of the environment and health and entail significant cost increases. In developing countries, rapid urban growth raises issues related to transportation and mobility, land-use (in some areas where it is difficult to exercise control over land values) and employment and can lead to the increasing precariousness of housing and slum conditions, as a result of the massive migration of people to urban centres or to the outskirts of big cities in search of better job opportunities.

Revising funding models

8. Globalization and financialization of the economy, particularly of urban economies, challenge established funding models in many large cities. Based on recent experience, the investments required in urban areas could increase significantly over the next decade. In order to ensure the mobilization of the massive investment needed to meet metropolitan challenges and increased responsibilities, the funding of metropolitan areas should be adapted to this reality.

Transforming our metropolitan world

Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

9. A series of goals related to the challenges that cities are facing have been identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 11 is to make cities and other human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The targets for 2030 address, inter alia, access to affordable housing; safe, affordable and sustainable transport systems; open green, public and natural spaces; good water quality; and clean and renewable energy. They also focus on protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage and fostering balanced economic, social, cultural and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas through the strengthening of national and regional development planning and the promotion of social, territorial and technical innovations.

Metropolitan planning in support of sustainable communities

10. If metropolitan areas are well planned and well developed, for example, through integrated participatory planning, solidarity and management approaches, they can help promote the establishment of local, regional and national communities that are economically, socially, culturally and environmentally viable.

An integrated and inclusive approach

11. In this regard, we need to adopt an integrated and inclusive approach to metropolitan development and human settlements which provides for affordable and adequate housing, for cultural and social services including education, for healthy environments and for infrastructure and which prioritizes slum upgrading, urban regeneration and measures designed to ensure the rights of existing populations.

12. In the light of the foregoing:

Promoting sustainable metropolitan development policies

(a) We undertake to promote integrated sustainable metropolitan development policies which support inclusive housing, social services, gender equality, our cultural heritage and a safe and healthy living environment for all (particularly children, youth, women, older persons, indigenous peoples and the disabled), green spaces, clean air and water, a wide range of employment opportunities, and affordable and sustainable transportation and energy policies;

Responding effectively to growth

(b) We recognize the importance of increasing the number of metropolitan areas that implement policies for sustainable urban planning and development in order to meet effectively the challenge presented by the expected growth of urban populations in the coming decades;

Sustainable mobility

(c) We recognize that transportation and mobility are central to the sustainable development of metropolitan areas. Sustainable mobility can enhance economic growth, improve accessibility, stimulate revitalization and foster improved economic and social inclusion while respecting the environment.

Therefore, we must work towards facilitating the free movement of people and goods, along with access to an environmentally sound, safe and affordable transportation infrastructure, with a view to improving social equity, health, city resilience, urban-rural linkages and the productivity of rural areas. Furthermore, we must promote active transportation which contributes to the reduction of congestion and an increase in community well-being;

Compact and mixed-use development

(d) We recognize that compact and mixed-use cities foster sustainable urban development, notably by creating jobs, reducing spending on infrastructure, increasing equity in access to public services, improving air quality, reducing congestion and mitigating urban sprawl;

Waste management

(e) We support the sustainable and cooperative management of waste through the application of the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) in order to meet spatial, technical and economic waste management challenges;

Disaster risk

(f) We recognize the importance of integrating natural and man-made disaster risk reduction into metropolitan planning and management, so as to increase community resilience to such events;

Climate change

(g) We recognize the key role played by metropolitan areas both in the fight against climate change and the putting in place of policies designed to enable adaptation to the impacts of global warming, and as leaders in the advances along the road towards low-carbon urban development;

A rural-urban balance

(h) We recognize the interdependence of rural and urban regions and the need to achieve a balance between both regions in regard to promoting equitable, managed and mutually reinforced development;

Eradicating poverty

(i) We undertake to work towards improving the quality of human settlements, including living and working conditions, with a view to eradicating poverty, so that all people have access to basic services, housing and mobility;

Sustainably conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage, biodiversity and landscapes

(j) We recognize the important role played by the cultural and natural heritage, including biodiversity and landscapes, in defining the identity of citizens and human settlements in metropolitan areas and the need to protect, rehabilitate and promote resilient ecosystems;

Promoting diversity and creativity

(k) We recognize the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity and are committed to providing the resources and opportunities needed for the development of creativity;

An integrated planning approach

(l) We undertake to promote an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and metropolitan areas, for example, by supporting local, regional and metropolitan authorities; by increasing public awareness and enhancing the participation of citizens, including the most vulnerable people and marginalized communities, in decision-making through the use of collaborative processes accessible to the whole community; and by relying on the contribution of academia;

Citizen participation

(m) We recognize the importance of citizen participation in the decision-making process that leads to investment-related choices and in urban and metropolitan planning, and the contribution to fostering a common understanding of local and metropolitan issues made by the public and institutional spaces that enable participation;

Involving multiple stakeholders

(n) We recognize that urban and metropolitan planning benefits from the involvement of multiple stakeholders, and from the full use of data disaggregated by age, gender and territory on, for example, sociodemographic and economic trends;

The right to the city for all

(o) We recognize the importance of placing the concept of the right to the city for all at the centre of metropolitan policies, so as to join citizen participation with the right to education, health, housing and work, and the recognition of and respect for differences, in order to promote cohabitation, friendly interaction, a strong metropolitan identity and a strong sense of belonging;

Role of national, regional and local governments

(p) We recognize the legitimacy of municipalities and other levels of government, within their jurisdictional boundaries, as regards setting out a coherent vision for metropolitan areas;

Metropolitan cooperation through partnerships

(q) We recognize that partnerships among cities, communities and national Governments play an important role in promoting sustainable metropolitan development. In this regard, we underscore the need to strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms and platforms, such as partnership arrangements and other tools that advance coordinated implementation of metropolitan cooperation, in accordance with the Habitat Agenda.[1] This will be achieved with the active

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (A/CONF.165/14), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

involvement of all United Nations partners and will have as its overall aim the achievement of sustainable urban development and a balance between urban and rural regions;

Suitable financing

(r) We recognize the importance of promoting financing suited to the challenges associated with metropolitan areas, encouraging better sharing of available resources between local communities and other levels of government and, in view of our limited resources, improving management efficiency.

Implementing metropolitan mechanisms

Contribution of metropolitan areas to the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda

13. The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II),[2] recognized local authorities as key partners for sustainable urbanization (para. 12). Therefore, the New Urban Agenda to be discussed at Habitat III must reiterate the importance of empowering local authorities and must now take into account metropolitan areas and the mechanisms required to meet the challenges associated with those areas.

Metropolitan cooperation and governance

14. Amid increasing urbanization, metropolitan cooperation may help to address issues extending beyond local boundaries in several strategic areas, with a view to ensuring the competitiveness, attractiveness and social inclusion and cohesion of the entire metropolitan area, in keeping with sustainable development principles.

15. Metropolitan governance requires a clear legal and institutional framework, based on principles of democracy, respect for local autonomy and subsidiarity. This framework must be provided with appropriate funding, which involves coordination mechanisms and sectorial (infrastructure, economic development, environmental, social and cultural) policies. Cooperation at the metropolitan level should be based on the representation of all citizens and stakeholders, regardless of their different mobilization, resources and engagement capabilities.

16. Such a framework and such cooperation would facilitate land-use planning, including the construction and operation of public transit, reduce disparities in public service provision, help manage urban growth, facilitate land-use coordination with transportation projects, and protect and enhance natural assets.

Metropolitan policy and resource distribution

17. Therefore, metropolitan policy must become the cornerstone of international and national economic policy, since metropolitan areas are the drivers of innovation and productivity worldwide. Metropolitan areas can also produce and distribute resources so as to foster better livelihoods for urban and rural residents alike.

[2] Ibid., annex I.

Metropoli..n financing

18. In order for the full potential of the planning process to be realized, metropolitan financing mechanisms must also be implemented to enable the achievement of metropolitan goals, with respect to transportation, social housing, and protection and enhanc ement of natural environments and other amenities.

New partnerships for metropolitan governance mechanisms

19. National Governments, together with local, regional and metropolitan officials, must develop cooperation mechanisms to meet the urbanization and sustainable development challenges that they face. These include metropolitan governance mechanisms aimed at reinforcing metropolitan management capacity, managing sustainable urban growth, coordinating land-use and transportation projects, strengthening the control of speculation and the security of land tenure, promoting economic development, supporting social and cultural diversity, fighting against social exclusion, fostering resilience to disasters and protecting and enhancing the natural environment and heritage. This will entail higher levels of democracy, public participation and decentralization policies.

Effective leadership for metropolitan prosperity

20. The success of metropolitan areas depends on effective public, private and civic leadership. Local, regional and metropolitan institutions that are democratic and accountable, together with elected officials within cities and national governments, must be committed to coordinated action and embrace a shared vision aimed at accommodating diverging viewpoints. A strong framework is required to support urban areas, and concerted action emanating from all levels of government is needed.

A new multilevel metropolitan cooperation partnership

Metropolitan cooperation

21. The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas recognizes the importance of increasing the number of accountable, capable, inclusive and socially just metropolitan areas which implement policies for sustainable urban planning and development in order to meet effectively the challenge presented by the expected growth of urban populations in the coming decades. Sustainable urban planning must engage multiple stakeholders and entail suitable financing. Metropolitan cooperation plays an important role in setting forth a vision for sustainable and cohesive urban regions, extending from the very outset of the metropolitan planning process through to the revitalization of older cities and neighbourhoods, and encompassing, for example, adoption of energy efficiency programmes for building management, adoption of food security programmes, ensuring connectivity of green spaces and development of sustainable and locally appropriate transportation systems. We further recognize the importance of mixed-use planning and of encouraging non-motorized mobility, for example, through promoting pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Furthermore we recognize the necessity for promoting gender equality.

Contribution to the New Urban Agenda

22. The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas proposes that the following contribution be considered in the New Urban Agenda, to be adopted at Habitat III, to be held in Quito in 2016:

A shared vision and multilevel collaboration

23. The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas recognizes that, to meet the challenges and opportunities of global urbanization, all levels of government will have to share a common vision in order to establish coherent strategies aimed at implementing the right to the city and improving the quality of life in urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

Relationship with all levels of government

24. If we are to meet these many challenges, we must step up our relationships with all levels of government. This is a necessity because economic, social, cultural and environmental development is governed by interdependent public policies. Metropolitan areas thus require the cooperation, integration, solidarity and concerted action of all levels of government.

Comprehensive partnership agreements

25. The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas recognizes that multilevel metropolitan cooperation partnerships should be implemented to promote the benefits of metropolitan cooperation. Such partnerships are intended to improve the standard of living and quality of life of metropolitan citizens. They also aim at:

Role of metropolitan areas

(a) Recognizing the role of metropolitan areas in the sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental development of urban and rural areas and countries;

Importance of business, labour and community stakeholders

(b) Recognizing the importance of business, the real estate sector, labour and community stakeholders, particularly within the education, civil society, social, cultural and environmental sectors, and within urban networks, as partners in implementing multilevel metropolitan cooperation partnerships;

Effective metropolitan governance

(c) Implementing effective metropolitan governance structures, mechanisms and arrangements directed towards facilitating the adoption and monitoring of successful policies which meet the challenges of sustainable, safe and equitable urbanization, in particular access to water, energy and sanitation and the fight against and adaptation to climate change;

Research-based knowledge

(d) Inviting local, national and international authorities to work with universities in transforming their knowledge and innovation capacities into concrete action in order to benefit citizens and assist authorities in their pursuit of improved governance.

Governance, democracy and international cooperation

26. These multi-stakeholder partnerships should be based on principles of good governance and democracy which ensure citizen participation, access to information, transparency and accountability, under either formal or informal arrangements. They must also be part of a commitment to achieving international cooperation among metropolitan areas so as to ensure improved sharing of expertise, promote social innovation and access to new technology, strengthen their management capacity and increase solidarity.

Follow-up, monitoring and research

International observatory for the advancement of metropolitan cooperation

27. Knowledge and research related to metropolitan areas should be strengthened through both existing and new platforms, such as an international observatory for information exchange and for the advancement of cooperation towards achieving sustainable metropolitan development.

Promotion and follow-up committee

28. Pursuant to the Montreal thematic meeting on metropolitan areas, a committee composed of the Chairs and Co-Chairs representing the national Governments, local authorities and civil society that participated in the meeting will promote the proposed principles and actions, as set out in the Declaration, within the context of the upcoming formulation of the New Urban Agenda at Habitat III, to be held in Quito in 2016.